

FY21 GOALS FOR NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT LISA FREEMAN

Background/Introduction: Since March 2020, the faculty, staff and students at NIU have dealt with the immense changes, both personal and professional, caused by COVID-19. Although NIU will continue to respond to this disruption, we must now look beyond the present to position NIU for future success. The FY21 goals articulate how we will do so over the next year.

These goals were created in alignment with NIU's mission, vision and values as well as with the Strategic Action Planning Framework presented to the Board of Trustees and university community in FY20. Together, they emphasize the following six themes: empowerment and shared responsibility; student recruitment, student success and student experience; academic excellence and curriculum innovation; diversity, equity and inclusion; research, artistry and engagement; and resource development and fiscal responsibility.

The goals reflect feedback received from the university community, including opportunities to position NIU to recover from the financial shock of the pandemic and emerge stronger. They connect cost containment and investment decisions to our enduring commitments to strategic enrollment management, equity in attainment, inclusive academic excellence and a robust research and innovation portfolio.

Additionally, the FY21 goals were constructed recognizing that NIU's dedicated faculty and staff are already balancing extraordinary responsibilities in a demanding time. The intention is not only to direct focus to the university's most essential priorities, but also to encourage members of our community to set aside or suspend less-essential activities.

As a research institution, NIU appreciates the breadth of approaches to what constitutes evidence in various disciplines. The metrics in this plan reflect the diversity of methodology and include both quantitative (e.g., numerical targets or statistical analysis that measure specific numerical outcomes) and qualitative measures (e.g., focus groups that provide insight on how people experience NIU). The assessment of NIU's success will be guided by effective practice research and expertise about how best to measure progress on our goals.

In this context, as we continue the process of moving to multiyear planning, the university will pursue the actions described below to assess and align programs and functions with NIU's strategic priorities. In some instances, supporting work is already underway due to previously announced workgroups and plans. In others, final action will be taken after further analysis, data collection and collaborative decision-making across departments, colleges, and divisions. Unquestionably, the current economic and public health crises are accelerating trends that were already in place, and we must respond.

1. EMPOWERMENT AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Our strategic action planning framework emphasizes our commitments to supporting the development of leaders, communicating transparently and effectively, and creating a culture of shared responsibility. These actions will be heightened in importance as we pivot and expand our focus from crisis response to crisis recovery. To be successful, NIU leaders will need to think beyond this fall and fiscal year to plan for long-term sustainability in an environment that has been significantly and permanently altered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

EMPOWERMENT AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY GOALS			
	Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
1A.	Use expertise available through internal and external partnerships to address our organizational need to align decision-making at all levels with the university's strategic priorities, keeping both immediate and long-term goals in mind as we respond to complex, rapidly changing circumstances.	Participation in and assessment of workshops/professional development sessions, and deployment of associated tools and techniques. FY21 deliverables that demonstrate strategic focus, such as multiyear, unit-level plans.	This work will enhance our ability to see new opportunities embedded in present circumstances and enable our success in attaining all other annual and longer-term objectives.
1B.	Continue to identify and revise practices, policies and procedures that need to be transformed, simplified, or eliminated.	Development and implementation of simplified administrative and academic processes and workflows in three or more areas prioritized by the university community. <i>Note:</i> Areas identified include contract approval; payroll-related procedures including approval and processing of additional pay; classroom scheduling; academic program review; assessment of student learning; and topics historically covered by the Academic Policy and Procedures Manual.	Simplification of work is needed across NIU to alleviate stress, improve productivity and responsiveness, and create opportunities for resource reallocation. These outcomes will enhance our success in attaining all other annual and longer-term objectives.

2. STUDENT RECRUITMENT, STUDENT SUCCESS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

We will continue to pursue the goals articulated in NIU's [Strategic Enrollment Management \(SEM\) plan](#), [SEM Accountability Plan](#), and our recently finalized [ILEA Equity plan](#), refreshing the plans as needed to reflect our dynamic environment so that our strategies, tactics and activities continue to support the three overarching SEM goals.

- Strengthen our distinctive identity as a public university that combines educational opportunity with student engagement.
- Achieve student enrollment that respects our mission and values while positioning NIU for fiscal sustainability.

- Support equitable access, opportunity and success for students from diverse backgrounds where [diversity is defined broadly](#).

We will also take specific actions to support the aspirations in NIU’s equity statement:

- Northern Illinois University strives to improve outcomes for all students by identifying and removing barriers that hinder the academic achievement and student experience of historically and currently underserved populations.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT, STUDENT SUCCESS AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE GOALS			
	Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
2A.	Create an NIU-specific set of social mobility outcomes data to complement our current narrative-driven approach and include outcomes-related content in promotional materials shared with prospective students and families, as well as current and prospective employees, partners, and donors.	Development of the social mobility outcomes data set, integration with promotional materials, and deployment by Enrollment Management Marketing and Communications (EMMC) and other units (ex: Career Services; Human Resource Services (HRS); Research and Innovation Partnerships (RIPS); Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development (OERD); and University Advancement) Fall 2021 student enrollment equal to or greater than SEM target of 17,005.	The main driver for this work is unrealized opportunity to reinforce our brand identity and more clearly articulate the value of an NIU education to prospective students and families. However, it should be noted that development of the social mobility dataset will also support our efforts in pursuit of academic excellence and curricular innovation, diversity, equity and inclusion, strategic development of research and engagement initiatives, and fiscal sustainability.
2B.	Maintain focus on closing gaps in degree attainment for low-income, Black and Latinx students using the institutional strategies, objectives and tactics presented in our SEM plan , SEM	Fall 2021 student enrollment equal to or greater than SEM target of 17,005. Achieve a fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time, full-time students between 76% and 80%, sustaining the progress demonstrated in	Efforts focused on equitable outcomes for students across racial and socioeconomic groups address institutional goals beyond those

	<p>Accountability Plan, and ILEA Equity plan, and look for additional ways to support NIU equity goals through participation in a new state-wide collaboration of public and private sector leaders, “The Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education,” and implementation of our Higher Learning Commission Quality Improvement Project which focuses on student success in gateway courses with a special emphasis on underserved students.</p>	<p>Fall 2020 when first-year retention rate increased from 72% to 78%, and retention rates for Asian, Black and Latinx students each increased by 10 percentage points.</p> <p>Sustaining this progress is consistent with the five-year plan that NIU committed to in 2017 to eliminate achievement gaps in retention rates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the first-year retention rates for Latinx and Asian American students at or above the institutional average, understanding that “at average” can fluctuate annually by 1% or 2%. • Reduce the first-year retention rate gaps for Black new freshmen to 10% or less within three years, understanding that success will mean consistently staying within 1% to 2% of that range for at least three years. <p>Participate in the “The Equity Working Group for Black Student Access and Success in Illinois Higher Education.”</p> <p>Implement our Higher Learning Commission Quality Improvement Project.</p>	<p>related to student success, most specifically our strategic goals related to diversity, equity and inclusion, resource development and fiscal responsibility.</p>
2C.	<p>Initiate a review of the policies and practices that NIU uses to maintain an environment conducive</p>	<p>External benchmarking of the model and processes that NIU uses to recognize and allocate resources to student groups and activities, completed and</p>	<p>These analyses are an important first step toward identifying and addressing any</p>

	<p>to learning and engagement, focusing this year on those used to recognize and allocate resources (including but not limited to funding and space) to student groups and activities; and those used to address academic, residential, student conduct and disciplinary conflicts.</p>	<p>used to recognize and address issues associated with unnecessary complexity, excess risk to the university, or real and perceived inequities.</p> <p>Analysis of institutional data related to student conduct referrals and outcomes, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and race, completed and then used to recognize and address any issues associated with real and/or perceived inequities in the student conduct pipeline and processes.</p>	<p>inequity or perceptions of inequity associated with the systems that impact the experience of our diverse students and their organizations.</p> <p>In addition to advancing our strategic priorities related to the student experience, this work will support our commitments to seek and be strengthened by the diverse experiences of our university community members, and relentlessly confront the challenges associated with structural inequity.</p> <p>Moreover, this work is complemented by initiatives described in the ILEA Equity Plan.</p>
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3. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION

The questions that the university should be using to drive curricular change are broad, and might seem overwhelming: How do we align our academic programs with NIU’s mission, vision, values, and strategic priorities? How do we differentiate our programs from competitors’ programs to enhance NIU’s impact and stature? What do we need to stop doing so that we have resources to invest in program enhancement and incentives for curriculum innovation?

The global pandemic provides a compelling reason to be aggressive and imaginative in questioning how effectively our current academic programs are meeting the needs of our undergraduate and graduate students, promoting enriched and dynamic interactions among

students and faculty, and addressing the needs of our region, nation and world. We must respond.

Feedback received from students, faculty, staff and administrators suggests that there is genuine desire to reshape the undergraduate academic portfolio to streamline undergraduate degree offerings; increase the integration and focus of our general education program; reduce course redundancy and the reliance on small courses; and provide clear pathways to graduation. Work to address these issues is in progress through the collaborative efforts of faculty and deans with support from the provost’s office, and the goals will be evident in their multiyear plans.

For our graduate students, we have an ethical obligation to ensure that the graduate programs that we offer recruit students from diverse backgrounds who can successfully complete and enter the career they desire. This means that we must not only understand the graduate experience more fully, but that we must rebalance the graduate program portfolio to eliminate programs that are underperforming and invest in programs that are high quality and in high demand. Our FY21 goals lay groundwork critical to achieving these outcomes.

Across our university, there is also strong interest in rethinking, reframing, and reconstructing our undergraduate and graduate curricula to make them more relevant, more inclusive, more interdisciplinary and more integrated with each other. The work to realize these aspirations will not and cannot be completed in the course of one fiscal year, but it must begin. And, the processes employed must allow us to work with speed consistent with the needs of the university, our students, faculty and staff and the communities we serve.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND CURRICULUM INNOVATION GOALS			
	Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
3A.	Identify and begin to remove structural barriers that inhibit transdisciplinary scholarship, and discourage curricular innovation and experimentation, appreciating that doing so might also help dismantle systems that contribute to inequitable outcomes for faculty who are Black, indigenous or people of color (BIPOC).	Formal recommendations about ways to remove existing barriers and promote transdisciplinary scholarship and curricular innovation. (The expectation is that these will be developed through collaborative processes with leadership from EVP/Provost, VP Research and Innovation Partnerships, Faculty Senate President and VP Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.) Recommendations used to produce a multiyear strategy and timeline for implementing necessary change.	Academic excellence and innovation are the essence of our work. Our goals related to student recruitment, success, and experience; diversity, equity and inclusion; and research, scholarship, artistry and engagement are critical and synergistic elements for achieving

3B.	Identify opportunities for strengthening graduate programs and enhancing the graduate student experience.	<p>Metrics for evaluation of graduate programs developed through collaborative efforts of Office of the Provost, deans, and graduate faculty.</p> <p>Established plan for collecting and distributing relevant graduate program data.</p> <p>Graduate program assessment and follow-up incorporated into college multiyear plans.</p> <p>Timeline and strategy for acquiring, reviewing and acting on data needed to understand and improve the graduate student experience from recruitment and admissions to degree completion and career placement, with a special emphasis on the experience of BIPOC and international graduate students.</p>	<p>academic excellence and fostering curricular innovation.</p> <p>Our dedication to the academic mission drives our efforts to align resources with strategic priorities and achieve long term financial sustainability.</p>
3C	Leverage lessons learned about course modalities during COVID-19 to position NIU to provide expanded degree opportunities for adult learners and place-bound students and respond to workforce needs of region and state.	<p>Propose two or three streamlined and relevant degree and certificate programs that enable timely completion.</p> <p>In collaboration with external partners, define the target student audience for these programs.</p> <p>Develop and deploy a communications and marketing strategy to also include messaging to students who left NIU prior to degree completion.</p>	

4. DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

All Huskies strive to live NIU’s commitment to social justice, equity and inclusivity. Those traits are woven throughout our mission, vision, and values, underpin our efforts to foster a welcoming university and inspire us to go beyond to identify, address and eradicate inequitable practices. We have demonstrated our willingness to recognize and remove

barriers that disproportionately hinder the academic achievement and student experience of historically and currently underserved populations. For example, we removed consideration of standardized test scores from the general admission and merit scholarship processes; worked to close gaps in degree attainment for low-income, first-generation, African American and Latinx students; required implicit bias training for hiring committees; and instituted cultural competency training for staff and faculty.

To advance social and racial justice we must work to sustain the successes we are seeing from these ongoing efforts, as we continue to examine and question our policies and practices. This approach will help us to focus talent, time and resources on dismantling and rebuilding the systems that will have the greatest impact. We have recently heard from numerous students, faculty and staff members who want to be part of these efforts and including their voices and energy will enhance the success of our efforts to achieve positive change. Accordingly, this year’s goals are informed both by our progress to date and by feedback received from members of our university community.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION GOALS			
	Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
4A.	Expand social justice education and training to include anti-racism training and continue promoting social justice topics and programs that convey NIU’s values and support an environment where Huskies can grow, achieve, serve and transform themselves and their communities.	Design and implementation of anti-racism training. Continued delivery of current social justice programming	We know that our dedication to being welcoming and inclusive to diverse students with different lived experiences resonates with prospective students, high school counselors, current students, staff and faculty and alumni. Thus, it is not surprising that the diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives proposed in this section synergize with the university’s goals related to enhancing student outcomes and experiences, increasing academic excellence, encouraging innovative research, scholarship,
4B.	Continue our efforts to increase the recruitment, hiring, retention and professional advancement of diverse faculty, staff and administrators. In addition to sustaining and strengthening the recruitment, retention and onboarding practices that we have found to be effective, we will take action to recognize and remove additional barriers that impede the success of NIU employees who are BIPOC.	Develop and begin to implement professional development and mentoring plans that support the retention and success of BIPOC faculty and staff. Tangible progress made with respect to analysis and revision of the policies, practices and processes used by NIU to evaluate faculty and staff members’ contributions and accomplishments at critical stages of their careers. Specifically, evidence that the EVP/Provost and the VP for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are working with deans, division leaders and	

		shared governance groups to examine the standards, assumptions, priorities and processes used to evaluate faculty and staff members' contributions and accomplishments at critical stages of their careers.	artistry and engagement, achieving fiscal sustainability. In FY21, our work to support our ongoing
4C.	Create a new webpage that not only highlights NIU's diversity, equity and inclusion goals, but also shares our plans and progress. The intent is to enhance transparency and accountability, as well as to provide a place for members of the Huskie community to become more engaged in this work.	Active webpage that highlights NIU's diversity, equity and inclusion goals, engagement opportunities, action plans and progress; included will be an indicator of NIU progress toward increasing vendor diversity and expenditures under the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Act, 30 ILCS 585.	commitment to equity, inclusivity and social justice will go beyond pursuit of goals 4A-C. We will strive to achieve important, related outcomes detailed elsewhere in this document, especially those focused on equitable outcomes and student experiences for undergraduate and graduate students across racial and socioeconomic groups.

5. RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, ARTISTRY AND ENGAGEMENT

NIU will continue to prepare our students and the communities we serve for a century of change by bringing our resources to bear on complex challenges, such as responding to environmental and ecosystem change and adaptation; advancing technology; preparing for shifting demographics; and interpreting the world around us. We will leverage the university's established and emerging strengths to support opportunities for transdisciplinary research, scholarship, artistry and innovation that contribute to our teaching and service missions; strengthen our designation by Carnegie as a community-engaged institution; and enhance our recognition by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) as an Innovation & Economic Prosperity University.

RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, ARTISTRY AND ENGAGEMENT GOALS			
	University Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
5A.	Launch a strategic development team comprised of members from the divisions of RIPS, OERD and University	Formal establishment of the strategic development team. Identification and development of public and private funding	This strategic development team models the creative and collaborative approach being

	<p>Advancement to link university expertise, networks and philanthropy and mobilize collective assets to advance institutional research, artistry, and engagement priorities.</p>	<p>opportunities and partnerships (ex: grants, gifts and collaborative relationships) with the potential to advance key university initiatives- specifically, projects associated with COVID-19, the Northern Illinois Center for Community Sustainability (NICCS) and/or the Emerging Research Initiatives prioritized by the competitive process initiated and paused in FY20.</p>	<p>encouraged throughout the university.</p> <p>The work of this team and the outcomes of its efforts have the potential to accelerate the progress of university priorities beyond research, scholarship, artistry, engagement and innovation, including those associated with student recruitment and student success; academic excellence and curricular innovation; diversity equity and inclusion; and resource development and fiscal responsibility.</p>
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6. RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting disruption of normal university operations preempted FY21 budget development because of the immediate need to address concerns related to the health and well-being of our students, faculty and staff. Since that time, COVID-19 has continued to present university leadership with mounting uncertainties, while adversely impacting NIU’s financial position. The adverse financial impact of COVID-19 is being felt across our university, and the decisions that NIU makes in FY21 will determine how the university is positioned to recover and emerge stronger. NIU will incorporate lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic as we continue to implement our multiyear budget and financial planning processes in support of university priorities.

As we transform our operations, respond to and create change, we will be mindful of the need to make financial decisions that both protect strategic priorities and provide for long-term sustainability. This will mean investing in some areas and cutting back in others. Our immediate and longer-term goals reflect these challenges.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY GOALS			
	Goal	Metric(s)	Synergies
6A.	Continue to refine and implement a multiyear budget and financial planning process. In recognition of the complex, rapidly changing circumstances associated with the global pandemic, we commit to engaging the Board of Trustees quarterly to communicate the status and progress toward targets, and to communicating transparently with the university community about the financial health of NIU.	Quarterly budget updates to the Board of Trustees and NIU community.	NIU is committed to making financial decisions that are academically responsive and fiscally responsible. As the university grapples with the unanticipated, pandemic-associated increase in expenses and decrease in revenue, we will avoid risking our strategic priorities. We will work collaboratively across divisions to develop multi-disciplinary solutions to challenges we face.
6B.	Assess and modify our space use and physical footprint in light of our changing needs and in support of other strategic goals.	Effective rationalization for space use, with improved utilization rates. Actions taken to align NIU's physical footprint with evolving academic priorities and economic conditions.	
6C.	Partner with the NIU Foundation to finalize campaign readiness and ensure that the university begins a multiyear fundraising initiative by July 1, 2022.	Achieve \$20 million in total philanthropy. Complete comprehensive case for support. Launch feasibility study no later than October 1, 2021.	Fundraising efforts and campaign priorities will align with the university's strategic action planning framework and support student success; student experiences; academic excellence; equity and inclusion initiatives; research, scholarship, artistry, and engagement.

Recommendation: The University requests Board of Trustees approval of the FY21 Presidential Goals.